

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001147

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [LE](#) [IR](#) [SU](#) [ES](#) [IN](#) [RU](#) [ICC](#) [EUN](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)

SUBJECT: RESULTS OF MARCH 16 EU FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING
(GAERC)

REF: A. STATE 39909

[1](#)B. USEU BRUSSELS 1018

Classified By: Rick Holtzapple, PolOff, Reasons 1.4 (B/D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) In addition to postponing Croatia's accession talks (septel), EU FMs at the March 16 General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) also noted positive developments in the Middle East and issued conclusions on Lebanon calling for Syria to withdraw all troops and intelligence services from Lebanon "completely, and in accordance with a precise timetable." EU FMs also heard a report on ongoing talks between the EU3 and Iran, and welcomed in particular the March 11 statement by Secretary Rice "of measures in support of these diplomatic efforts." On Sudan, the GAERC expressed hope that negotiations in the UNSC will lead to a consensus allowing "resolutions to be adopted for the implementation of a UN mission to Sudan and of measures that can end the violence and impunity in Darfur through appealing to the ICC." The Council reviewed the state of negotiations for the adoption of the four &common spaces8 agreements with Russia (a lot of work remains, but the Presidency is optimistic). EU FMs also agreed the EU's positions for the on-going UN Commission on Human Rights, including support for a Belarus resolution. The GAERC, however, failed to agree a package of revisions to the EU's generalized Scheme of Trade Preferences for the period beginning on April 1, 2005. END SUMMARY.

MEPP AND LEBANON

[1](#)2. (U) FMs discussed recent developments between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but the GAERC issued no Conclusions. With the media, Luxembourg FM Jean Asselborn for the Presidency noted a "certain optimism" in the region based on latest developments, and said the EU welcomed finalization of an agreement on transfer of security control in Jericho and the resumption of talks in Cairo. External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner also welcomed discussion of a ceasefire by Palestinian militaias at the Cairo meetings. She said the "new momentum" should be translated in terms of donors, commitments, and that the Commission is ready to do its part.

[1](#)3. (U) The GAERC Conclusions called for "complete and immediate implementation of UNSCR 1559" and underlined that "Syrian troops and intelligence services must be withdrawn completely, and in accordance with a precise timetable." The GAERC also stressed the importance of holding elections "on schedule" and added that the EU would be willing to consider deployment of an elections observer mission. Ferrero-Waldner was more effusive, speaking to the press about "the will of the people spilling into the streets" and commented that the elections should be held "as planned in May." She cited the EU's "wealth of experience" on elections assistance, and said the EU had a number of options on how to help. An EU technical mission was on the ground March 16 to explore the way forward. She also noted that the Commission had presented an "Action Plan" for Lebanon in the context of the European Neighborhood policy (along with similar plans for Egypt and the three Caucasus countries). She hoped the Council would approve all five Action Plans in April, although negotiations with Lebanon would only begin with a new government.

[1](#)4. (C) We have not heard any reports that Hezbollah was discussed at all during the GAERC. A Council staffer told us, however, that despite the upbeat language on Lebanon in the Conclusions, during the GAERC several FMs expressed concern about the possible "collision course" between the withdrawal and electoral calendars. There could be a serious issue on how to respond if significant Syrian troops were still in the Bekaa Valley at the time of elections. For now, the EU was using the phrase "precise timetable", but hoped that specific dates might emerge from the Joint Military Committee negotiations by the end of March.

IRAN

[1](#)5. (C) Solana reported on behalf of the EU3 on the latest

discussions with Iran. The Council staffer told us there was little debate and the issue of a deadline for progress on the talks did not come up at all. The EU was now awaiting the outcome of the next Steering Board, but our source commented that the EU might find it will need to await the outcome of the upcoming elections in Iran before it can really judge the course of events. GAERC Conclusions "welcomed the support received from the international community and, in particular, the statement made by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on 11 March of measures in support of these diplomatic efforts." With the press, FM Asselborn noted as well the need for support from Russia and China. He added that the EU is continuing negotiations on the trade agreement, but also the political dialogue and human rights. He mentioned that the EU and Iran met on March 15-16 in Tehran on human rights issues.

SUDAN

16. (C) Our source said there was some discussion about the "balance" between the mandate of peacekeeping missions in Sudan and the resources available to them, but this did not result in a clear EU position on the issue. Conclusions said the EU hoped talks at the UNSC would rapidly lead to a consensus on resolutions allowing for the implementation of measures that could lead to cessation of violence in Darfur "through appealing to" (in French, "par la saisine de") the ICC. While describing the Conclusions as "ambiguous" in order not to short-circuit discussions in New York, the Council staffer said the EU's language intentionally stakes out a position favoring more than one UNSC resolution and inclusion of a specific reference to the ICC.

RUSSIA

17. (SBU) Conclusions focused entirely on efforts to agree the four "common spaces" by the time of the EU-Russia Summit on May 10. Asselborn admitted a lot of work remains, but the Presidency is optimistic. Ferrero-Waldner said she would go to Moscow on March 21, with Trade Commissioner Mandelson, and an EU-Russia ministerial would be held in Luxembourg on April 11. Asked by the press about Chechnya, Ferrero-Waldner made reference to a "sub-committee" where the EU and Russia speak about human rights. Its first meeting was in Luxembourg, and was "very good". At the Summit, she said, "all questions" will be included. Our Council source said that during the GAERC debate no more than three delegations even made reference to their "preoccupation" with Chechnya, but sparked no debate. Russian behavior in nearby states (Georgia, Moldova) or at the OSCE was not raised at all, according to our source.

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

18. (U) EU FMs announced the EU would join the US in tabling a resolution on Belarus at Geneva, and "reaffirmed the need to see appropriate condemnation at the CHR of anti-Semitism in all its forms." The EU also noted its concern about the human rights situation in both Iran and China, but was non-committal about what it would do on these countries at the CHR session. The Conclusions did not mention Cuba.

GSP REVISION

19. (U) In a bit of a surprise, the GAERC failed to agree a package of revisions today for the EU's Generalized System of Preferences in trade, that was scheduled to come into effect on April 1, 2005 in part to assist the recovery of tsunami-struck countries in Asia. FM Asselborn said the

SIPDIS

outstanding issues were whether to include El Salvador among the countries receiving the most generous treatment, and over provisions for textiles. Trade Commissioner Mandelson told the press the textile issue, particularly whether India could qualify for GSP at its current level of textile exports. Press reports indicated Italy had led a group of states in refusing to raise the threshold to cover India. FM Asselborn said Luxembourg hopes to secure agreement on March 24 at PermRep level to allow implementation of the changes on April 11.

SCHNABEL

.